1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

631 life and each could be taken as a unit complete in itself. Individual studies and comparisons of one with another would provide much valuable material. Familiarity with individuals and groups belong-
184 ing to all the major tribal groups, and study of their folk-lore and customs has led me to conclude that as in language, so in social structure and in culture, the differences are of small account. In offering illustrative material, I shall give its tribal source.

The King

643 To describe the royal office and functions it would be necessary
177 to use the past tense. That reason, along with others, leads me to exclude this subject from the present study. Effective European occupation of the country and government by direct rule[1] have atrophied the royal office among the Ovimbundu until to-day kings survive as hardly more than living museum pieces. This being the case, I shall only enumerate the royal functions, very briefly characterize them, and pass on to describe other and living parts of the Umbundu social organism.

643 The principal functions of the royal office were:
776 1. *Religious.* The spirits of the king's ancestors were the principal national deities. The king was not only high priest but also the visible vice-regent and incarnation of the spirits. The
[778] sacrifices at the royal shrine, *kakokoto* (literally, at the skulls), the place of the royal skulls, were for the nation in order:

643 (*a*) *To control the elements*, i.e. to ensure a sufficient supply of
372 rain and avoid the dangers caused by hail, by lightning, &c. Also
•789 to control fire by providing a new fire properly (ceremonially) kindled from which everyone took his fire. A king's reign was spoken of as 'during the Water of Lord So-and-so' (*Kovava a Ñalã Ngandi*), or 'during the Fire of Lord So-and-so' (*Kondalu ya Ñalã Ngandi*).

241 (*b*) *To ensure fertility*, toward which desideratum the royal
644 marriage had great influence. The queen's special province was
[782] agriculture and her kitchen was sanctified by human sacrifice to guarantee the national food supply. Ceremonially treated seed was distributed to be mixed with the seed of each granary.

[1] 'Direct rule' is applied in most parts of Africa where European settlement is the predominant consideration and also where centralized government is the ideal. 'Indirect rule' is best illustrated in the Gold Coast, Nigeria, Uganda, and Tanganyika Territory.

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night in the *etumbo* praying to or communing with ancestral spirits, when the occasion arises; Suku is regarded as too remote to receive prayers.

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While cooking, a woman may spill a little meal on the ground for the spirits; at a meal, a person may spill a little food or beer for the same purpose. A portion of the meat at a feast may likewise be sacrificed, but it is often a less desirable portion, such as the intestines.(1)

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Agricultural rituals were held before planting, at which time the headman and his wife had intercourse in their field and sacred seed from the chief's granary was distributed, a few grains to be mixed with the seed to be planted on each plot. When the maize began to ripen a few ears were sent to the chief before any were eaten.(2)

DIVINERS(3)

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The word *ocimbanda* is used both for a diviner and for a maker of medicines. To distinguish the two, the diviner may be called *ocimbanda congombo* ("of the basket"), the herbalist *ocimbanda coviti* ("of trees or sticks"). Some practitioners are both diviner and herbalist. A female diviner is called *combula*.(4) An *ocimbanda* frequently specialises in a certain kind of case;(5) and among the members of the profession there are many degrees of proficiency. One may work only in his own village, another may be consulted on matters of concern to the whole district or chiefdom; others go on professional journeys carrying their baskets, and accumulate profits in animals and cloth. The greater the reputation of the diviner, the greater the charges he makes for his services.

The tasks of the *ocimbanda* are:-

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(a) To discover the cause of sickness, death, or any evil which has befallen the individual or the community. Sickness and death are always believed to be due either to the workings of spirits who are demanding sacrifices, or to living enemies who have malicious spirits under their control or who have bought potent charms. The diviner, after consulting the spirit who speaks in and through his basket, names the spirit who is causing the trouble and tells the victim what its demands are, or, if the enemy is a living person, indicates in a general manner from whence the trouble comes, e.g. to a woman "Your baskets are too well made; you are hated because of them", or, to a man, "This illness was found on a journey taken to collect a debt". If requested, the diviner makes a counter-charm to offset that which has caused the ill.

(b) To interpret omens and dreams.

(c) To give advice on personal problems.

(d) To dispense medicines and charms.

(e) To bring or withhold rain, or to see who is guilty of withholding it. [789]

(1) Ibid., see also Cushnan, loc.cit.
(2) Childs, personal communication.
(3) Based on Tucker, 1940.
(4) Dunbly, (3) 1934.
(5) Ibid.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

538 appeal. For example, the pigeon says, *Tu kolela oku iva* ("We believe
825 in stealing"), and the following are further instances of the same kind.

Ocinganja is a bird which has several calls. Early in the year the female says as she looks at the newly hatched brood, "This year I have borne white children." Later the little birds grow black feathers. Then the mother cries, "Each year disappointment." Sometimes the female says to the cock bird, "A stick has stuck in my eye. I wonder whether it will make a growth there." The bird is probably the Black Flycatcher (*Melaenornis pammelaina*).

Epandacokocoko says, "Where will the guests stay? Where? Where? Where?" This is an unfailing intimation that strangers will visit the village.

Omanula. This is another bird which announces the approach of strangers by saying, "*Akombe! Akombe! Akombe!*" ("Guests! Guests! Guests!") Two birds are supposed to carry on a dialogue.

Sankanjuele says, "He who has eaten should leave the rest for the important ones," meaning himself.

Ondonga answers, "Do you mean me? The way you scold hurts me to my heart."

Ungolombia. The male and female birds *ungolombia* are about to cross a stream. The female says, "I am wearing four yards of cloth," meaning that she will get wet. The husband says, three times, "If you are wearing four yards of cloth, why do you not cross at the source of the river?"

Omboco says, "When I lay my eggs on the ground, the white ants destroy them." The call continues, "When I lay them up high, *kalupamba* steals them." *Omboco* cries, "Such hardship, goodness gracious me!" The exclamation is, "*A mai we,*" literally, "O my mother!"

Kocukuku the Barn Owl (*Typo alba*) and his mate speak together. The female says, "*Cimuku,* do you eat rats?" He answers, "I do not eat them, they have tails."

Ungungu says, "No big animal lays eggs, so the crocodile must be a bird, too."

Ocimbamba (night hawk) may be heard on moonlight nights saying, "O lion, here are the people."

Ekuti says, "My child is gone to *Koputu.*" *Koputu,* in Umbundu, means a far off place. Possibly *Koputu* is a corruption of Oporto. This bird makes a monotonous and continuous cry from sunrise to sunset.

Epumumu (hornbills) are large black birds. The female says, "I'm going, I'm going, I'm going to our village." The male replies, "Don't go, don't go, the rain has come; let us plant."

Kalendipanga. This bird is quiet until September, the month in which rain begins to fall. Then the bird says, "Save! Save! Save!" He means this as a warning to people who eat their corn instead of saving some for seed. The seed should be sown in October when the rains have begun. The derivation of the name of this bird is important. *Okulenda,* to count; *ovipanga,* the rows of corn in a field.

Kalusundanjovo. The female bird says, "Let's throw away the big drum." The male answers, "When we have thrown it away, what shall we do for dances?"

821 Observations of the weather are of importance in fixing dates for sowing and reaping; such dates are the base of time reckoning. Rainfall is important where cattle are kept, and a knowledge of the stars is of service to hunters and caravan leaders when following unfamiliar routes.

• [789] The weather is thought to be controlled to some extent by the *ocimbanda* ("medicine-man") and his performances. The rain-

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

drunk. The concoction is described in Umbundu as *ihemba vioku tundisapo imo* ("medicine to take away belly"). 847

When the monthly period begins too early in life, the medicine-man recommends that the young girl should wear the cowrie necklace worn by her mother's mother. 841

A deformed child is destroyed, but not if it has been allowed to survive the first day. 847

If male triplets are born, two stay permanently with the mother. At the age of five years one child goes to the king, whose child he becomes. 851

When a woman has had relationships with more than one man, she will die in childbirth unless the medicine-man is called to cure her. 837

In a Vachokue village of eastern Angola I bought a female wooden figure. It was explained that this would be nursed by a woman, one of whose twins was dead, in order to induce another conception. Moreover, the nursing of the figure prevents the death of the second twin. The Ovimbundu also use these wooden figurines for replacing dead twins (p. 163). 532 845 842

Children are suckled for a long time; even those of three years and older come to the breast. There are instances in which milk is present but lacking the nutritive qualities; then the baby is likely to die. The matter is simpler when a mother gives no milk at all because the baby is given to another woman, but not necessarily to a woman who is suckling a child. A baby whose mother has no milk may be given to a woman who has not borne a child for many years, and the sucking of the child quickly induces a milk supply. This is agreed upon by informants at Ngalangi and Elende who have seen a child nursed by a woman with withered breasts. Protection is given to the fontanelle by covering it with a vegetable gum which hardens. 853

Near the chief village of the Vangangella at Ngalangi there is a mound decorated with feathers and painted wooden posts (Plate XCII, Fig. 1). Childless women are placed on the mound which is near a river. They are covered with mud, after which the medicine-man sings songs and administers potions. The women go home and are made to sit on mounds in their kitchens. These mounds, which are made in rows, like earth heaped up after hoeing a trench, may be a symbol of successful agriculture and human fertility. 842 789

On looking into the subject of blood brotherhood I found that an exchange of blood between two males who swore mutual fidelity was at one time common. At the present day an exchange of blood is 608

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

cages and wooden animals to use as playthings. Girls mold small animals from clay. The bull-roarer is in use as a plaything at Elende. 524

There is a game of hide and seek for boys. A knife is hidden; then a boy who has been absent for a time enters the ring marked off for the game. His proximity to the knife is indicated by playing on a musical bow. There are taps on the instrument which mean that the knife is far away. On the contrary, when the searcher approaches the hidden knife, the boy with the bow plays a distinctive note, *yelula, yelula*, meaning "pick it up, pick it up."

Boys readily make a simple apparatus for playing a game of lassoing a hoop. A pliable branch is bent so as to form a circle, then the ends are lashed together with bark strips. The lasso is a piece of rattan or bark having at each end a corncob or a small stick three inches long. One boy bowls the hoop so that it passes in front of, and a few feet away from his opponent, who stands twenty-five feet distant. As the hoop passes in front of him, the boy throws his lasso in such a way that it twines round the hoop and brings it to the ground.

There are dances of many kinds, but Ngonga says that he would not know from the steps only what particular purpose the dance served. Several dances have been described, each in its appropriate section. There are no dances specially arranged to celebrate weddings or births. The funeral dance is described along with other ceremonies relating to interment. The medicine-man dances in connection with making rain or curing the sick. In order to say why the dance was being performed, it would be necessary to listen to the words of the songs; these are usually chanted in accompaniment to shuffling movements and the rhythm of drums. 535 [789]

Some of the older men and women perform dances and sing songs that are unknown to the younger generation. Dancing is in favor during the months of May and June because there are supplies of maize for making beer. As the dry season advances the maize formerly available for making beer is consumed as food, hence dancing is not so usual. Ngonga says that the old people know a dance which should be performed at new moon "so that there will be no sickness during this moon." Older men dance in commemoration of events during past wars, while women are spectators, and on these occasions there are beer-drinking and the slaughter of an ox. A group of men keeps up a shuffling dance while an old man relates a war story in a singsong voice. The oldest man is the first to cut the meat, after which each man helps himself. 535 527 [727]

535 Almost every evening one may hear the tapping of drums an the songs of dancers, because in addition to dances for a funeral c other special occasion there are ordinary dances of amusement i which lines of men and women advance and retreat, or men an women circle round the drums making arm movements accom panied by a swaying rhythm.

[243] The dance *onyaco*, performed in June when the corn is ripe, ma have an ancient history and special significance as part of an agri cultural rite. When corn is being stored the people sing, "There i grain in the house, may it never be out." There is no dance i [226] connection with fishing.

224 There is mimicry of animals in the hunting game played by boys The frog, the leopard, and other animals are imitated in certai games, but I have no evidence of the performance of mimetic dance in relation to any cult for increasing the supply of animal life.

535 The use of the small ball *ombunje* illustrates the way in whic [534] an apparent toy can be used in rites of a religious kind. *Ombunj* consists of a hard spherical fruit about six centimeters in diameter in which several hard seeds rattle. The sphere is covered with a layer of cloth over which lizard skin is stretched and sewn.

[769] When the people wish to commemorate the death of a king, o [789] when the king is sick, the medicine-man (*ocimbanda*) says that there must be *osaka* dancing. A strong man dances for many hours while holding this little ball in his outstretched hand. Other men who are dancing use their fists to hit the muscles of the outstretched arm in an attempt to make the holder drop the ball (*ombunje*). If he does so another man will promptly take hold of it. The precise nature of the endurance test is unexplained, but there is possibly the idea of giving strength to a sick king by this tension and endurance. My interpreter thought this was so, but could not explain why the dance should be performed to commemorate the death of a king. It would seem natural, however, to transfer the *ombunje* rite to a commemorative festival, if in the first place it was part of the last rites of a dying king.

534 There are among the Ovimbundu specialists in dancing, singing, 463 and the playing of musical instruments. *Onjimbi* is the word for a singer of merit who starts the choruses. *Ocili* is a dancer of more than ordinary skill. When a man is required to play a drum or other instrument I have noticed that it is thought necessary to bring a specialist. There is no doubt that drumming requires special aptitude and practice. The man who plays the long drum is *usiki*, the drum

3: Hambly E-8 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

was too light to make it effective as a tool or weapon (Plate XIII, Fig. 4). At Bailundu I was informed that an ax of this kind is used in a medicine-man's dance which is intended to cure a man who is sick because a spirit has entered into him. The sickness may have occurred because the man has broken a promise. 755

The medicine-man, or sometimes the patient himself, dances violently, meanwhile cutting about him with the ax (*omutoko*), which is finally used for killing a little pig whose blood is drunk by the sick man. This is the ritual that was previously mentioned in describing divination.

The following are important ceremonial objects: The ax *ekuse* (Plate XIII, Fig. 5) was the one used for killing slaves who were eaten at the death of a king. This object was secured in the Vaseie country near Vila Nova de Selles. It is of handsome appearance, having a copper circle inlaid into the iron blade. A spear from Bailundu is likewise important because of its use in ritual (Plate XIII, Fig. 8). Before war and hunting this spear was thrust first into an ox then into a slave. The human and animal flesh were cooked together and eaten from the same pot. The female figure used by the medicine-man for consultation with regard to the correct path for a caravan has been described. A carved wooden post obtained from Bailundu was set up at cross-paths so that it might be visited by a sick person or his representative who would make sacrifice there. 411 [266] 782

Without parallel among ceremonial objects used by the Ovimbundu is a small wooden cloth-covered box from Bailundu. This contains a piece of root of cylindrical form tightly bound with cloth having at one end a cowrie shell. The box is the shrine of *Kandundu*, for whom a small hut is built in order to contain the box. Any one who sees the contents of the shrine is said to become blind. *Kandundu* is believed to be the "spirit of dreaming who makes swellings come on the body." 779

Antelope horns are in general use as containers of magical potions. One born from Bailundu is used for holding sweet beer which is drunk by a person afflicted by bad dreams. A large horn with a piece of fur attached, also from Bailundu, is named *ocindiko*. The horn contains a mixture of fat and charcoal which is heated near camp after sunset, when men are on the march. The spreading fumes keep away lions and thieves. It was said that a thief is deterred because the fumes make him cough. 789 237

4:Dorsey E-4, 5 (no date)1899 FP13 Mbundu FP13

puts on his necklace and headdress, which gives him a strange, wild appearance. Taking one of the gourd rattles, and giving the others to the parties interested, setting up the images, he is ready for operations. He begins by shaking the gourds and blowing the horn whistle, at the same time chanting in a minor strain, all the rest responding in chorus. In this way he works himself up into a sort of frenzy. He then takes the basket of charms, and, by throwing them slightly, claims to be able to read from them the past and future, and to declare the guilt or innocence of a person. In this way trivial matters, as well as the most weighty, even life and death, are decided. For instance, if, while determining whether an accused person is a witch or not, in his shaking and throwing of the charms the little horn with the wax and red seeds should stand upright, that would be taken as evidence of guilt; while if, on the contrary, the little image with the small cowry shell on the head should stand upright, that is evidence conclusive that the person is innocent. Not only is the question of guilt thus decided, but witch-doctors are thought to be able to predict coming events.

An important object in the outfit is a large horn of the roan antelope, containing a smaller antelope horn, medicines, oils, etc., prepared by the ocimbanda.[1] This is known as *embinga*, or "loaded horn," and is considered efficacious in warding off from its possessor all harm, lightning, disease, witches, spirits, wild animals, etc. Carried upon journeys, it also insures a prosperous issue to the undertaking, and affords as well protection. Somewhat similar in construction, but used for an entirely different purpose, is the *acifungo* or rain wand. This is the tail of an ox, into which are inserted two small horns with medicines and oils. By blowing the horns and waving the tail, the ocimbanda is supposed to drive off rains at will.[1]

Of numerous small charms, *umbanda*, in the collection, two are of sufficient interest to merit notice. One consists of two four-inch-long bottle-shaped objects made of woven string, from the mouth of each of which projects a two-inch tuft of very tiny feathers. The two objects are joined at the top and bottom, and singly bear a decided resemblance to a Hopi *tiponi*, or religious society's palladium. They contain medicines and are worn from the neck. This is a special war charm, and affords protection against bullets and all harm in battle. The other charm is an ox's hoof into which is thrust a small antelope horn and medicines. In times of special danger, it is put up somewhere in the village for protection. Still

[1] Mr. Woodside also states that this same power is attributed by the Ocimbanda to white men; and when they are told that we do not possess this power, "they calmly look us in the eye and say, 'wa kemba' (you lie)."

[1] [i.e., diviner. Cf. pp. 183-186, cat. 116.—Analyst]

5: Hambly E-5 (1929-30)1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

containing the head and attaching it to a pole by which it was supported on the shoulders of two bearers. Then followed a series of questions from the village chief (sekulu), and answers were supposed to be given through forward or backward swinging of the pole. A forward swing was affirmative, and a backward swing was negative. I have seen this procedure followed with a coffin supported as described, and the questions related to the cause of death.

The head of a king would be asked, "Do you want an ox for sacrifice? We will give you one." "Do you want a new skin for your head? We will give you one." Such was the ceremony for bringing spiritual aid to what was otherwise a commercial undertaking.

A wooden figure of a female decorated with black feathers was an indispensable part of the equipment of a medicine-man who accompanied a caravan. When in doubt with regard to the path he knelt at the parting of the ways and consulted the figure. Replies came in a falsetto voice attained by plugging his nostrils. Horns containing a mixture of fat, charcoal, and other substances were carried so that they might be planted near a camping ground to drive away thieves and leopards. These horns are still used and are obtainable.

At the present day a belated Ocimbundu, who fears the sun may set before he reaches the next village, will take some earth from an ant hill. This earth he places in the fork of a tree saying, "O sun wait for me a little while."

Examination of the culture of the Ovimbundu, combined with observations on the Umbundu language and somatic traits, indicate that the Ovimbundu are a part of the Bantu peoples of southwest Africa. They have, however, taken advantage of the open Benguela highlands to develop their system of agriculture far beyond that which is usually carried on by Negroes in forest clearings.

In agricultural work a clear division of labor is observed. Men clear timber and burn the bush, after which hoe cultivation is in the hands of women, though men assist with the harvest. Unmarried girls help in the fields and each has a piece of ground whose products are the cultivator's personal property. This gives unmarried girls a measure of economic independence. Usually a girl spends the proceeds of her work in buying trinkets and palm-oil for personal decoration. Under their system of polygyny each wife has her own field, utensils, and a separate hut with its fire and cooking arrangements. The husband visits each hut for four consecutive nights, though in some districts there is a seven night cycle. Men always take evening meals in the mens' council house (onjango) in the center (to notice the tombs of hunters, which consist of cairns of stones enclosing a)[1]

[1] [Printer's error: This sentence refers to p. 159. -- Analyst]